

John G. Richardson-Sophia E. Blatchford House
37 Catherine Street
Newport
Newport County
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-316

HABS
RI,
3-NEWP,
48-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

JOHN G. RICHARDSON - SOPHIA E. BLATCHFORD HOUSE

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RI,
3-NEWP,
48-

Location: 37 Catherine Street.

Present Owner: Gee Pee Inc., Mr. George Peters.

Present Occupants: The building contains eight apartments with numerous tenants, mostly of short term.

Present Use: Apartment house.

Statement of Significance: This is one of the larger residential buildings in this area of Newport. It is a particularly handsome example of the Shingle Style.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners:

The building is located in Plat 26, Lot 4. The following is an incomplete chain of title from Newport City Clerk's Records for the city of Newport. Reference is to number and volume of the Land Evidence Books, (LEB.--, p.--).

1870 Deed of October 14, 1870, recorded in LEB. 41, p. 264.

From: Joseph I. Bailey
To: John G. Richardson
For: \$3,500

"... bounded... Northerly on Catherine Street, one hundred feet, Easterly on land of John A.C. Stacy, one hundred twenty six and a half feet, Southerly on land of George H. Norman, and Westerly on land of Richard Morris Hunt..."

1872 Deed of July 8, 1872, recorded in LEB. 44, p. 1.

From: John G. Richardson
To: Ferdinand A. Abell
For: \$17,000

1874 Deed of December 18, 1874, recorded in LEB. 45, p. 633.

From: Ferdinand A. Abell
To: Henry A. Tailer

1875 Deed of May 1, 1875, recorded in LEB. 46, p. 43.

From: Henry A. Tailer
To: Alfred Smith

1878 Deed of January 1, 1878, recorded in LEB. 48, p. 343.

From: Alfred Smith
To: Sophia E. Blatchford

1923 Deed of March 23, 1923, recorded in LEB. 113, p. 543.

From: Sophia E. Blatchford
To: Peter Delangie

1945 Deed of March 31, 1945, recorded in LEB. 157, p. 226.

From: Peter Delangie
To: George W. Michael

1959 Deed of March 30, 1959, recorded in LEB. 197, p. 550.

From: George W. Michael
To: Leonard J. Rubin

1964 Deed of March 12, 1964, recorded in LEB. 210, p. 430.

From: Leonard J. Rubin
To: William S. and Mary E. Venancio

1964 Deed of December 8, 1964, recorded in LEB. 212, p. 413.

From: William S. Venancio
To: Ernest W. Ritchie, Jr.

1965 Deed of November 22, 1965, recorded in LEB. 215, p. 356.

From: Ernest W. Ritchie, Jr.
To: Henry G. Turnbull

1967 Deed of December 20, 1967, recorded in LEB. 222, p. 112.

From: Henry G. Turnbull
To: Gee Pee Inc.

2. Date of erection: 1870-1872, rebuilt ca. 1885

3. Architect: Unknown
 4. Builder: Unknown
 5. Original plans: None known
 6. Alterations and additions: Deeds indicate the house was built originally between 1870 and 1872 for John G. Richardson, although little from this period is visible. A further reference in the Newport Mercury, November 5, 1870, describes, "A house for John G. Richardson on Catherine Street, 41 feet by 45 feet, French roof, to cost \$11,000." The house was extensively remodelled or even rebuilt during the period of the Shingle Style, ca. 1885, for Sophia E. Blatchford. According to records in the Newport Tax Assessor's Office, the value of improvements rose from \$9,000 to \$15,000 between 1879 and 1889. The house was again renovated about 1919. Extensive repairs were made primarily to the third floor following a fire. See Newport Mercury, October 27, 1919.
 7. Important old views: None known
- B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:
- C. Sources of Information:
1. Primary and unpublished sources:
Records of Deeds in Newport City Hall.
Tax evaluations in Newport Tax Assessor's Office.
Newport Atlases, Newport Historical Society.
 2. Secondary and published sources:
Newport Mercury, November 5, 1870.
Newport Mercury, October 27, 1919.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is a large, handsome example of the Shingle Style building typical of the later periods of development in this section of Newport.
2. Condition of fabric: The exterior is in good condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: About 60 feet by 78 feet; irregular

rectangle; 2 1/2 stories.

2. Foundations: Foundations are random coursed ashlar.
3. Wall construction: Natural weathered shingles cover the entire exterior.
4. Structural system: The house is of wood frame construction.
5. Chimneys: Three tan, Roman brick chimneys with tapered tops are visible from the front.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways: The main entrance at the east side of the north front has a wide eight panelled front door set in a simple wood frame. Secondary entrances are located on the south and west sides.
 - b. Windows: All windows are double hung with two, four, or sixteen light sashes.
7. Roof: The gabled and hipped roofs are covered with shingles or asphalt squares laid diagonally. The facade is dominated by a broad gable which establishes a strong central axis. The simple boxed eaves project slightly. There are hooded dormers on the south, east, and west sides.
8. Porches, stoops, and bulkheads: The L-shaped porch across the north front turns around the east side to the main door. The supports consist of a rectangular pier faced with an engaged semi-circular column. The shingled wall surface with its horizontal pattern continues unbroken from the wall and porch parapet across the surfaces of the complex columns. The west portion of the front porch has been enclosed. A porch is located in the center of the large third story gable.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: The original floor plan is not visible. Various apartments are reached from stair halls located at each of the entrances. The rooms in the first floor front apartment appear to be the original principal rooms.
2. Stairways: The open well stairway in the entrance hall at the north front door is of a broken plan with three steps to a large landing, three more steps to a turn, and a straight run to the second floor. The stairway is decorated with

slender turned balusters, a ramped molded rail, and square panelled newels. The main stairway continues to the third floor. Originally the stairway led to a large open hall on the second floor, entered through a broad archway which is now closed. A simple U-shaped enclosed stairway serves the apartments reached from the north side door. This stairway was apparently the original rear stairway.

3. Flooring: The south apartment has narrow hardwood strip flooring and some parquet flooring.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls and ceilings are plaster with molded coved ceiling cornices.
5. Doorways and doors: Four panel doors are set in doorways with molded mitered architraves.
6. Special decorative features: The first floor front apartment has three fireplaces with marble or tiled facings. The one-story mantels, typical of the period ca. 1900, have finely carved details.
7. Hardware: The doors have flat brass escutcheons, oval brass knobs, and concealed hinges.
8. Lighting: There are modern fixtures throughout.
9. Heating: There is a modern heating system.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: This large house fills a small level lot in a residential neighborhood.
2. Historic landscape design: None
3. Outbuildings: A modern asphalt driveway and carport fill most of the rear of the property.
4. Walks: A short walk, perpendicular to the sidewalk, leads to the flight of stairs which is parallel to the front of the house.

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

Newport HABS Project -- 1969. Sponsored in cooperation with the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, Antoinette F. Downing, Chairman. Under the direction of James C. Massey, Chief of HABS, and Osmund Overby, (University of Missouri), Project

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Supervisor, Jack E. Boucher, photographer.